

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 20, 2010

WHAT: Black Grace Dance Company
WHEN: Tuesday, March 9 at 7:30 PM
WHERE: UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
TICKETS: Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.umasstix.com/>
IMAGES: To download images relating to this press release please go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerwide/pressRoom/>

(Black Grace, New Zealand's Premiere All-Male Dance Company, Brings Its Extraordinary Repertoire to the UMass Fine Arts Center)

If you turned a rugby team into a ballet company, the result might become Black Grace. That's a comparison made by Artistic Director Neil Ieremia of his all male dance company boasting some of New Zealand's finest and most respected contemporary dancers. The company performs on Tuesday, March 9, at 7:30 PM in the UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall. There will be a pre-performance talk with Artistic Director and Founder Neil Ieremia from 6:30 – 7 PM in the rear seating area of Concert Hall.

Ieremia's choreography fuses Pacific Island and Maori dance with contemporary dance including traditional Maori haka dances and Samoan slap dancing made popular by Australian and New Zealand rugby teams. The squatting macho shouts are only one source of inspiration for the Ieremia. Some themes include parental abuse, violence, and the history of slavery in the Pacific Islands. The company's trademark dance, "Minoi" is a more pure modern update of percussive haka dance forms.

In 2005, the Company celebrated its tenth anniversary and performed a sell-out season in Auckland, followed by an extensive tour of the United States and Mexico. During its tour, the Company performed a return season at the prestigious Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival, debuted on New York's 42nd Street for a four-week season, and performed at Mexico's renowned Cervantino Festival. Black Grace also performed at Tourism New Zealand's "100% Pure" event in Sydney, at the Aichi World Expo, and for the New Zealand Embassy at the Tram Theatre in Tokyo.

Most recently, Black Grace enjoyed a successful tour of North America and Canada followed by a sold-out season at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Noumea, New Caledonia. In 2009, the Guam Humanities Council invited Black Grace to lead a series of workshops and hold discussions and performances for the people of Guam.

Black Grace founder and Artistic Director Neil Ieremia is in the vanguard of New Zealand's most accomplished choreographers and, through his vision, imbues Black Grace with an explosive mix of rhythm, spirit, and energy. In recognition of his considerable achievements, Ieremia was the recipient of the 2005 Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Award for outstanding creative achievement and for his contribution to the arts in New Zealand. In 2009, Neil accepted a resolution passed by the Guam Legislation in recognition of the Company's work in Guam. Ieremia is a 2009 recipient of the Paul D. Fleck Fellowship in the Arts from The Banff Centre in Canada. There will be a pre-performance talk with Neil Ieremia from 6:30 to 7:00 PM in the rear seating area of the Concert Hall.

Black Grace is an *Arts Give Back* event. We ask that audience-goers bring an item that will help meet the needs of the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society, including non-scoopable cat litter, canned kitten food, plastic cat carriers, and more. For a complete wish list, visit <http://www.dpvhs.org/>.

Tickets for Black Grace are \$40, \$30, and \$15; Five College/GCC/STCC and youth 17 and under are \$15. Tickets are available from the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or on the Fine Arts Center ticket website at <http://www.umasstix.com/>.

The appearance of Black Grace Dance Company is sponsored by 93.9 FM The River and the UMass Campus Center Hotel. For more information about Black Grace, visit the company's website at www.blackgrace.co.nz. There was also a PBS special about the company, find out more at www.pbs.org/blackgrace/about.html.

Images suitable for press coverage are available at the Fine Arts Center website: <http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerwide/pressRoom/>.

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